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3. — *The Life of Edgar Allan Poe.* By WILLIAM F. GILL. Illustrated. Boston : William F. Gill & Co. 1877. 12mo. pp. 315.

Mr. GILL's life of Poe has chiefly a negative value. As a destructive analysis of Griswold's memoir it has considerable merits, but it sheds little more light on the sad career of Poe himself. With Dr. Griswold the author has easy work. He produces evidence to show that all the following statements (besides many others) made by Griswold are, to say the least, incorrect : 1st, That the Baltimore committee which awarded Poe a prize for a "manuscript found in a bottle," did so solely on account of the legibility of his handwriting ; 2d, That one of the committee, Mr. Kennedy, took him to a clothing-store, and "purchased for him a respectable suit, with a change of linen, and sent him to a bath" ; 3d, That "Hans Pfaal" was an imitation of Locke's "Moon Hoax" ; 4th, That Poe's connection with the Literary Messenger was merely that of general contributor and writer of notices ; 5th, That he was obliged to leave the Messenger on account of his drunkenness ; 6th, That the "Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym" was unsuccessful in England ; 7th, That Poe's "Haunted Palace" was written after Longfellow's "Beleaguered City" ; 8th, That he pirated Thomas Brown's "Textbook of Conchology" ; 9th, That his withdrawal from The Gentleman's Magazine was caused by his irregularities, and by his making improper use of the books of the concern to assist him in getting up a new monthly ; 10th, That he quarrelled with his friend Graham, the proprietor of Graham's Magazine, was dismissed by him, and that for some four or five years not a line written by him was purchased for the magazine ; 11th, That there was a quarrel between Poe and his co-laborer, Clarke. There is so much of this sort of evidence, that a strong support is given to the inference that Griswold's misstatements grew out of a malicious desire to revenge himself on Poe for a criticism the latter had written.

But we are compelled to say, after examining Mr. Gill's evidence, and giving it all the weight that can be claimed for it, it hardly leaves us in the enthusiastic frame of mind over the poet's life which the author would seem to think proper. He devotes a good deal of space to show that Poe was not a "sot," and that he could never have drunk to excess, because there is evidence to show that a single glass of wine was enough to upset him. This may have been the case ; but it is not enough to overcome the evidence of letters and conversations showing the general conviction of his best friends during his lifetime that his habits were hopelessly and irredeemably bad. And this, it seems to us, is all that

the public need care to know. There may be cases — the cases of a few great and conspicuous men — in whose career the world has a sufficient stake to justify it in a minute and microscopic post-mortem examination into their most private affairs. But Poe was not one of these. He was a writer of prose and verse, popular enough in its day, but not likely ever to place him very high in the temple of fame; he led an unhappy life, and was the victim of intemperance. Do these facts furnish any justification for a ghoul-like feast of scandal over his grave, with his own reputation for the *pièce de résistance*, and the private lives of those that were nearest to him, including his wife, and even women who were merely engaged to be married to him, for side-dishes? We are, of course, not now criticising Mr. Gill, but Mr. Gill's predecessors, whose unclean appetite for scandal has made Mr. Gill's work necessary.

The appearance of this book raises anew the question of Poe's standing as a writer; his reputation has fairly stood the test of the time which has elapsed since his death, and we see no reason why, within the narrow range in which he wrote, it should not stand a much longer test. He has always had a higher place in France than in England or (since his death) in America, and the reason is not difficult to guess. His poetry has the great merit for foreigners of smoothness of versification. It is essentially musical, not only in such onomatopoeic poems as the "Bells," but in all his verses. We should be willing almost to wager that, had some of them been transcribed in cipher, like that described in the "Gold-Bug," even Poe's cryptographic skill would have broken down in an attempt to read them, and for the simple reason that his rule of the predominance of the letter *e* is so fundamentally violated. The key to any poems written in cipher would be that the most frequent consonants are *l, m, n, r*, — the liquids that render his verse so smooth and pleasing to the ear, and the vowels such as the onomatopoeic effect requires. But there is much more in it than smoothness. There are the same qualities that we find in his prose, — the sense of misery, haunting despair, and terror, and the power of communicating these feelings to the reader. Of course, in his poems the ingenuity and power of analysis and logical reasoning which we find in his prose tales do not appear; but the moral qualities are always the same. No one but the author of the "Raven" could have written the "Fall of the House of Usher," and *vice versa*. There is too, throughout, a total absence of dramatic interest in character; indeed, we may say of almost all distinctively human interest. Love, courage, self-sacrifice, heroism, sympathy, — for these we do not look to Poe. He

takes us to a world apart from the ordinary human affections and higher emotions, to a dark chamber, where we feel ourselves bound by a strange fascination of horror to watch the ever-descending knife-blade of the pendulum approach our heart, or the ever-increasing crack in the doomed house widen, or the blackening fancies of the tortured brain deepen to madness. Poe, however, was a genius. No one else has attempted or accomplished exactly what he did, and no one is ever likely to attempt it again. In many of the details of his art he was a master. As a writer of narrative English he is unsurpassed; and the extraordinary ingenuity of the plots of some of his stories leave no room to doubt that but for the misfortunes of his life and character he might have obtained great success in fiction on a more ambitious scale.

4. — *Life and Letters of George Cabot.* By HENRY CABOT LODGE. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co. 1877. 8vo. pp. 615.

SELECTIONS from the correspondence of George Cabot form the principal part of this valuable addition to American biography. Outside of this Mr. Lodge was able to obtain but a small amount of material for his work, owing to the destruction by Mr. Cabot, just before his death, of all his own papers and letters. Had not the letters written by him been fortunately preserved, almost all record of one of the foremost leaders of the great party to which we owe the Constitution, and we may almost say the Union itself, would have been lost. Mr. Lodge has made use of his letters judiciously, prefixing to each chapter a short account of the period to which the correspondence contained in it refers.

He has very modestly avoided indulging himself in original discussion, but what he has given us on the subject of New England Federalism and the Hartford Convention leads us to regret that there is not more. His refutation of the charges contained in John Quincy Adams's pamphlet is very well done, and few people will be apt to quarrel with the following passage, in which he gives his estimate of the results of the convention and of the War of 1812:—

“The Federalists generally, all the more sensible ones certainly, were satisfied with the work of the convention. The general government, soon after the convention adjourned, passed a law which permitted the use of state troops, as desired by New England, and urged by the report of the convention, and not many days after came the welcome tidings of peace. The war party no longer insisted on an acknowledgment of those rights for which alone they had fought, and for which they had shed so much blood and squandered so